

War Behind Decision To Move Wrestlemania VII Indoors

By **LINDA DECKARD**

MESA, Ariz. — Wrestlemania VII, set for March 24 at the 100,000-seat Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum a year ago, has been moved to the complex's 16,000-capacity Sports Arena. It's one of the latest casualties of the Persian Gulf War.

Steve Planamenta, manager of media relations for World Wrestling Federation which produces the event, confirmed the decision to move to the smaller, more secure venue was made Jan. 28, immediately following Super Bowl XXV in Tampa.

"Security will be much easier to maintain," Planamenta told AB. "We were looking at 100,000 tickets, 20,000 more than Super Bowl. ... Circumstances in the world right now are unfortunate. If the unthinkable happens and there is a terrorist attack anywhere in L.A., or in the country, before Wrestlemania, people would not want to go to a gathering of 100,000 people. So much of our audience is kids."

George Gonzalez, manager of the Los Angeles facilities, seen here at the District VII meet of the International Assn. of Auditorium

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Managers, said seating might go as high as 16,500. The arena is virtually sold out now from advance sales based on the coliseum rental.

"It still has a gross potential of \$1 million," Gonzalez said. Tickets are \$150 to \$10. That compares to a normal gate of \$100,000-\$150,000 for wrestling. It would be a record for an arena wrestling event, he pointed out.

The system for switching tickets already purchased for the coliseum to comparable seats in the Sports Arena is being undertaken now, Planamenta said. Distribution of the cost of making the change is to be determined. WWF is the promoter and producer; Los Angeles Sports Arena is the venue; and Ticketmaster is handling tickets.

"Fortunately, 95 percent of the

advance tickets were bought with credit cards, so we have an accurate record. We can get back to each and every fan," Planamenta said.

The decision was not made because of poor ticket sales, he emphasized. Wrestlemania VI drew 67,678 to the Toronto SkyDome last year. Tickets went on sale two months out. This year's event is still two months away and the Main Event had not even been announced. Tickets went on sale immediately after Wrestlemania VI, held April 1, 1990. The Main Event was announced Feb. 1 — Hulk Hogan versus Sgt. Slaughter.

Wrestlemania III in the Silverdome still holds the attendance record, with 93,173, "sold in one and one half months," Planamenta said.